

CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

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LAMINGTON NATIONAL PARK

Lamington National Park is one of Australia's best known bird spots, and rightly so. Birds which are difficult to find elsewhere are more easily found at Lamington. The camping area is graced with many birds, as well as pademelons.

In winter it is cold there, especially in the mornings, as we found out. But there is a superb view, many birds, and majestic rainforest all around.

The camping ground is half lawn, half rainforest shrubs, and you can camp out in the open or under a fair amount of shelter.

The O'Reillys Mountain Resort is nearby, with a kiosk and a souvenir shop. Facilities are quite adequate at the camping ground.

Now to the birds. At the camping ground Crimson Rosellas by the dozen and a few King Parrots take handouts, and Wonga Pigeons quietly trudge over the lawns at the picnic ground. Scrub-turkeys are common and will take your toast if you're not careful. (I wasn't careful and a Scrub-turkey enjoyed peanut butter on toast for breakfast.) Satin Bower Birds are easy to find and watching a Bowerbird at its bower at the edge of the picnic grounds was a highlight. Regent Bowerbirds sweep through each morning, doing the rounds of each camper. Be quick on the camera, they don't hang around.

An Eastern Whipbird floated around our tent and was quite friendly. But easily the highlight of the camping area was the tame Noisy Pitta, which took bread from your hand. We followed it around the nearby shrubs as it bounced along like a rubber ball. Lewin's Honeyeaters hang around the camping ground. They're quite tame. White-browed Scrubwrens are tame around the tents and Yellow-throated Scrubwrens sometimes appear too. Brown Thornbills and Large-billed Scrubwrens flutter about the shrubs allowing you to see them at close range.

In the forest the floor is dominated by White-browed Scrubwrens, and

Yellow-throated Scrubwrens were also common. Logrunners make an incredible racket in leaf litter and are easily found, especially early in the morning. Albert's Lyrebirds make their fantastic song (I saw five in one day) and run around the forest. Whipbirds are quite common and not all that hard to spot. White's Thrushes are commonly found on or near the deck. Higher up in the middle canopy Large-billed Scrubwrens and Brown Warblers fly about the foliage, Green Catbirds hop and jump along the branches, King Parrots whistle to their hearts content, and Brown Pigeons sit and watch you carefully, as do the Yellow Robins.

Pittas bounce along like rubber balls, and chasing one into a sunbeam is rewarding, and Emerald Pigeons surprise you. On the Border Track an American birdwatcher and I saw perhaps the rarest bird that either of us have ever seen. A tantalising glimpse of the Rufous Scrub Bird. We heard him call but only saw him once. On a second journey I saw his distinctive tail disappear into the forest.

Other birds are the White-headed Pigeons (the WOP birds) which sit up high in the trees and go WOP, Grey Goshawks to scare all of the small birds stupid (the Grey Goshawk tends to hide in trees unlike its more common counterpart the Brown Goshawk), Little Lorikeets occur in the open grassy eucalypt forests, as do the White-throated Treecreepers. Striated Thornbills, Spotted Pardalotes, and Little Shrike-thrushes were seen occasionally. Blue Wrens and Grey Fantails were common too.

The Albert's Lyrebirds were special. One I listened to imitated Satin Bowerbirds, Crimson Rosellas, King Parrots, Yellow Robins, Shrike-thrushes, Black Cockatoos and falling timber in its song.

Just to drive home what kind of place the Lamington is, with one piece of bread one afternoon, I fed Scrub Turkeys, Satin Bowerbirds, Yellow Robins, White-browed Scrubwrens, Lewin's Honeyeaters, and a Noisy Pitta. I also fed Regent Bowerbirds, Yellow-throated Scrubwrens, an Eastern Whipbird and some Blue Wrens.

The vegetation is mostly subtropical rainforest and with some open grassy eucalypt forest and temperate rainforest with its Antarctic Beech. The walking track system is extensive and detailed. It takes you to waterfalls, lookouts, creeks and pools.

Lamington is certainly worth a visit. As with many crowded national parks, 99% of the people go to Lamington to have a picnic and feed the rosellas and don't leave the lawns, preferring a restaurant and a hit of tennis.

Rainforest birdwatching here is not done with people all around you. There are plenty of quiet places in Lamington.

Simon Kennedy

NOTES FOR DECEMBER & JANUARY

INDIAN MYNAHS A mynah was seen in Wheeler Street in early December. In late January a flock of about a dozen was seen at Wattle Flat. (GB)

CUCKOOS are still in the district but silent. However, Horsefield Bronze-cuckoos are heard at Fryerstown. (Dec 13)

ROBINS. Many young yellow robins at Fryerstown (CN)

BLUE PINCUSHIONS IN FLOWER Reports of few pincushions in flower in some areas (RM) and flowering well in others (CN)

MUCKLEFORD BIRDS. Many Dusky Woodswallows, White-browed Woodswallows, White-winged Trillers, and White-fronted chats have been seen at Muckleford. Crested Bellbirds have been heard. (GB)

CICADAS. Large noisy, black insects with transparent wings have been seen at the oak forest. Thought to be cicadas. (KT).

KOOKABURRAS TAKE NESTING BOXES. The box at Barkers Creek intended for ducks has been taken over by Kookaburras, even though the box is not the kind recommended for these birds. The young is attempting to laugh. (HT)

BEES TAKE OVER NESTING BOX. A rosella laid an egg, then bees took over. The parents returned when the bees were removed and successfully hatched the egg. (KM)

BARKING OWL KILLED IN FROOMES ROAD. An owl killed in Froomes Road on New Year's Eve was identified as a Barking Owl. Identification took note of its bright yellow eye, lack of facial mask and size (about 40 cm) as well as general appearance. Nearby residents had previously noted a pair on the road. They were shifted off, but apparently returned. The club's bird list shows records for Eppalock, Barkers Creek and Muckleford.

CHILEAN SPEAR GRASS was collected from the Western Reserve during January. It was near the creek bank. (EP)

RUFIOUS FANTAIL was seen at Tipperary Springs on 14 January. (EP)

DUSKY MOORHEN has been seen on a dam at Castlemaine North. (RM)

MUSK LORIKEETS have been particularly plentiful in the town over the past few months.

CASTLEMAINE PLANT LIST. Edition 8 has been prepared. Names have been upgraded and records by Neville Scarlett for Mt Alexander have been included. Cost is \$2 (or \$3 posted)

SALTWATER TRACK AND THE CASCADES

Plants seen in flower along Saltwater Track and Dearden Track on the club's excursion on December 12 included

Red-anther wallaby-grass	Silky parrot-pea	Flat weed*
Hill wallaby-grass	Handsome flat-pea	Primrose goodenia
Link's wallaby-grass	Trailing oxyclosum	Spur velleia
Bristly wallaby-grass	Wedge-pea	Tall lobelia
Five-awned spear-grass	Mitchell's wattle	Swamp isotome
Kangaroo grass	Silver wattle	Grass trigger-plant
Rough spear-grass	Magenta stork's-bill	Tall bluebell
Tussock grass (2 species)	Blackberry*	Annual bluebell
Long-hair plume-grass	Bidgee-widgee	Blue pincushion
Short-hair plume-grass	Sheep's burr	Button everlasting
Silvery hair-grass*	Silky tea-tree	Sticky everlasting
Yorkshire fog*	Common rice-flower	Grey everlasting
Tall sedge	Slender dodder-laurel	Cotton fireweed
Remote-flowered rush	Pink bells	Dogwood
Joint-leaf rush	Digger's speedwell	Scaly buttons
Spiny-headed mat-rush	Rough star-hair	Wiry buttons
Wattle mat-rush	Common centaury	Silky daisy-bush
Mouse-ear chick-weed*	Small St John's wort	Common cat's-ear*

The bird list for the excursion was as

Straw-necked ibis	B.F. cuckoo-shrike (h)	W-throated treec'r (h)
White ibis	Fairy martin	Red wattlebird
White-faced heron	Rufous song-lark	White-naped honeyeater
Wood duck	Grey fantail	White-plumed honeyeater
Black duck	Willy wagtail	Fuscous honeyeater
Sulphur-crested cockatoo	Yellow robin	Spotted pardalote (h)
Long-billed corella	Rufous whistler	Sparrow
Galah	Grey shrike-thrush	Indian mynah
Red-rumped parrot	Blackbird	Starling
Crimson rosella	Blue wren	Oriole
Eastern rosella	Weebill	Magpie
Crested pigeon	Buff-tail thornbill (h)	Little raven
Kookaburra (h)		

CAPE BROOM - A PEST PLANT

A report by R Adams and D Simmons in a recent issue of the *Victorian Naturalist* (Vol 108 (4) 1991) discusses the invasive potential of Cape Broom. This plant is a pest species in Castlemaine, and a good deal of effort has been given over the last couple of years in removing it from the butterfly area of the botanic gardens.

The picture is given by Adams and Simmons is not very encouraging.

Cape Broom has two types of seed. 82% of the seeds are 'hardseeded'. These form a pool of seed in the soil, and are able to germinate prolifically after fire. The other 18% of the seeds are able to germinate as soon as conditions are suitable.

Cape Broom produces numerous seed pods, each producing an average of five seeds. Compared with wattles, few of the seeds are damaged by insects while still in the pod. The dry pods split explosively, and eject seeds up to 3 metres from the parent plant. Ants collect the seed and further disperse them. . This agrees with observation - the plants have been seen to spread by about 3 metres per year. Spreading of seed by slashing or machinery can increase markedly the rate of spread.

There can a substantial number of seeds present in soil. The average number found in the study was 3774 seeds per square metre.

Under dense mature stands of cape broom, 790 seedlings were produced per square metre. This is equivalent to 7.9 million seedlings per hectare. In addition to this, there is the large bank of seeds that will germinate after a fire.

Even small colonising populations produce large number of seeds. One colonising population was removed by slashing, and resulted in 174 new plants per square metre. Plants continued to germinate over the next three years.

Its sale from nurseries is a difficulty in curtailing its spread.

Some conclusions to be drawn are

- slashing or pulling are of no use unless follow-up removal takes place for at least 3 or more years afterwards.
- even if broom is apparently eradicated from an area, there may be dense germination after a fire.
- new patches need immediate attention. Once seeding occurs, easy eradication will not be possible.
- some areas apparently without broom may have seed stored, which will germinate after a fire.

SATIN FLY CATCHER AT HUMBOLDT

On a visit to the Humboldt and Belltopper Hill area on Jan 16th, several interesting plant and bird records were made. Bird highlight was the observation of a Satin Flycatcher. Its shining black back was a very noticeable feature of the bird. Plant observations included *Juncus gregiflorus*, which is a new record for Fryers Ridge. Stiff geebungs were in full flower, and some dwarf geebungs were also seen.

SANDON IN NOVEMBER

Birds seen drinking at the bird bath were

Grey fantail (pair)	Scarlet robin (pair)
Wrens	Thornbills - buff-rumped, striated, brown
Silvereyes	Honeyeaters - yellow-faced
Magpies	

Birds seen on the property were

Australasian grebe (pair nesting)	Hooded robins (pair)
White-faced heron	Rufous whistlers (pair)
Little eagle	Grey shrike-thrush
Brown falcon	Yellow-rumped thornbills
Masked lapwing	White-throated treecreeper (pair)
Galahs	Red wattlebird (pair)
Sulphur-crested cockatoos	Brown-headed honeyeaters
Rosellas - crimson and eastern	Mistletoe bird
Pallid cuckoo	Spotted pardalotes
Horsefield bronze-cuckoo	Diamond firetail
Shining bronze-cuckoo (heard)	Olive-backed oriole
Kookaburra (pair)	White-winged choughs
Welcome swallow (pair)	Grey currawongs
Richard's pipit	Australian ravens
Black-faced cuckoo-shrike	

[White-throated treecreeper was omitted from the September list]
List contributed by S. Starr

NAME CHANGES FOR PLANTS

There have been a number of name changes involving orchids. Mosquito orchids have been divided into two species. The identity of the local species is yet to be worked out, but the new *Acianthus pusillus* is more common than *A. exsertus*. Others that have been divided into several species are the Greencomb Spider Orchid, the Spider Orchid, and the Potato Orchid. The local Bird Orchid is now *Chiloglottis valida* and the Hyacinth Orchid is now *Dipodium roseum*.

All of the Chocolate Lilies are now in the genus *Arthropodium*.

The Common Ground-fern, formerly *Culcita dubia*, has become *C. calochlaena dubia* and placed in family Dicksoniaceae.

The swamp wallaby-grasses are now divided into a number of species. The common swamp wallaby-grass found in the Castlemaine district is now called *Amphibrous nervosa*.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT - 1991

As usual, the Club has conducted some most enjoyable monthly meetings with a wide range of outstanding programs. The excursions too have proved to be most varied and interesting. Members have also attended WVFNCA campouts, and have commented very highly on them.

The Club has also been active in wide range of conservation, natural history and community matters.

Members have been part of the committee investigating the establishment of a fauna reserve in the district. This group has had discussions with the Loddon Prison, with the view of placing the reserve on prison land.

Club members have helped with the assessment of roads in nearby Shires, and made all of the surveys in the Maldon Shire. The results in Maldon have been incorporated in the draft report for that Shire.

We also helped the Conservation Trust for Volunteers to pull broom from the Eltham Copper Butterfly area of the Botanic gardens. An objection was lodged to a proposal to close part of Froomes Road in this locality.

Other Club activities have included

- completion of the questionnaire for the "Frog Watch" program on behalf of the Club by Mrs R. Mills.
- responses to a number of requests for information about local flora.
- a reply by Mrs B. Perry about the proposed Lead Beaters Possum management plan. The Club congratulated her for the thoughtful response.
- a conducted walk through Kalimna Park as part of the Castlemaine Garden Festival. A booklet was prepared for use on the walk.
- preliminary work on membership of the threatened species network.
- suggestions to the V.F.N.C. A. on a logo for use by the Association.
- comments on the Bendigo Region "Draft Fire Prevention Plan." Particular reference was made about control burning during the year at Glenluce.
- support for a bird sanctuary opposite the Sutton Grange School. The Club gave comments on the natural history of the area and made some management suggestions.
- involvement in, and support for a City Council initiative for beautification of Castlemaine's streams.
- preparation, by Mrs Broadway, of an entry in the State Festival's table-setting competition. The entry showed typical FNC bush picnic.
- support for purchase of part of Long Swamp at Moolort.
- support by individual members for the "Friends of Vaughan"
- concern about tree-felling practices during power-line construction, and a request for a meeting with SEC staff.
- comments on the draft local environment protection plan prepared by members of the Newstead Residents and Ratepayers' Association.

E. Perkins President.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM

Fri 14 Feb. TWO ASPECTS OF VICTORIA. Walking in the Glenelg River district with Beris Perry and George Broadway, and the Bogong High Plains with Chris Norwood. 8.00 pm at the High School. This is the annual meeting.

Sat 15 Feb. LAANACOORIE. Bird watching at Laanacoorie. Leader is George Broadway. Depending on the weather, leave at 1.30 pm or 3.00 pm. If the latter, take tea. Meet at SEC, Mostyn St.

Sat 22 Feb. DAWN BREAKFAST & BIRDWATCH. See the sun rise over the Loddon River at Glenluce. Meet 6 am sharp at 15 Gaulton St. Leader is M Oliver.

Thurs 27 Feb. BUSINESS MEETING 7.30 pm at 38 Campbell Street.

Mar 6-9. THE BASIN CAMPOUT. Labour Day weekend, 1992.

Fri 13 Mar. NEAR AND FAR Another double program by Club members. National Parks of Queensland with Frank Duffin and Maldon Roadsides with Ern Perkins. 8 pm at the High School.

Sat 14 Mar. BENDIGO SEWERAGE PONDS. Bird watching on the Bendigo Sewerage Ponds, Epsom. Meet SEC, Mostyn St at 1.30 pm. Leader is G Broadway.

Thurs 19 March. BIRDWATCHING. A joint activity with Castlemaine U3A. Meet Continuing Education, Templeton St at 9 am. Leaders of this inaugural outing are M Oliver and C Norwood.

Fri 10 April. MISTLETOES. Talk by Malcolm Calder.

Sat 11 April. MISTLETOE EXCURSION. Excursion to Gaash Road. 1.30 pm.

MEETINGS: Second Friday of each month at Castlemaine High School at 8.00 pm. Business meetings on the fourth Thursday at 38 Campbell St at 7.30 p.m. to which all members are invited to attend. Visitors are invited to attend the Club's sessions.

SUGGESTED FEES 1992 The Business Meeting suggested that fees be
Single: \$12 Student/pensioner: \$8 Supporting member: \$20
Family: \$18 Newsletter posted: subscription plus \$6

COMMITTEE 1991: Ern Perkins (Pres), Chris Norwood (VP), Maggie Oliver (VP), Rita Mills (Newsl.), Barbara Maund (Sec), Kaye Turner, Clodagh Norwood (Treas), Enid Hall, Beris Perry, George Broadway, Brenda Envall.

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club inc. Box 324, Castlemaine Vic 3450.